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JUN 20 1961

Young 'Salesman' For John Birch Society Speaks

By RAY KALTWASSER

(Enterprise-Record Staff Writer)

Chet Meriam is a tall, polite young man with a quick smile who could easily pass for a traveling salesman, which, in a way, he is.

His product?

Americianism.

Meriam, who does not have horns or breathe fire, has one other unusual feature.

He is a paid member of the John Birch Society.

Meriam spoke here last night at the Veterans Memorial Hall in a program sponsored by the Marine Corps League Auxiliary. Present were about 45 persons, mostly senior citizens, and mostly in open support of the young man and his cause.

There was just enough opposition, though, to make the evening a lively one. This came from a young Chico State College professor and two school teachers who managed to ruffle the young speaker only once in the meeting.

"Apparently," he said, "we have some vocal collectivists in the front row."

What is a real live member of the John Birch Society like? What does he believe? Here are a few excerpts from his talk:

Liberals, socialists, Communists and Fascists are almost identical creatures. They all believe in absolute government power "to promote the general welfare."

The welfare state is not new. It is the oldest, most reactionary form of government the world has ever known.

The Supreme Court is guilty of a "sinister kind of subversion" in reinterpreting "our eternal values" in its 1954 decision on school segregation.

The new target date for destruction of America by world communism is 1967. It may come sooner.

Cuba is Communist and Castro has been a Red since 1959.

Mexico will fall to communism by the end of this year.

any new American government that he came to believe that he was a paid member of the John Birch Society. He said a paid member of the John Birch Society is a person who is paid to speak for the society and to pass out pamphlets on the society (which he did last night). Others, he said, are assigned to the job of organizing campaigns.

Secretary of State (Dulles) was later by President Eisenhower. The President refused to act, he said, and the two friends were later fired. One is now a professor at the University of California.

"We are now engaged in World War III. The enemy is world communism. We can beat them without a shooting war, but, 'if necessary, we must go to war.' He added, he didn't think they will use the atom bomb if there is a shooting war, but if they did, "we could destroy them."

These were the newsy highlights of a long talk, preceded by a movie on the Allen-Bradley Co., of Milwaukee, designed to show a picture of modern American capitalism at work.

The talk was followed by a brief question and answer period.

It was here that the opposition opened up.

Said one: "Why did your founder (Robert Welch) refer to President Eisenhower as a 'conscious, dedicated agent of the Communist conspiracy'?"

He didn't, said Meriam.

But then, he added ambiguously, "I'm sure he would not have made such a statement as that unless he backed it up. . . . President Eisenhower has not sued (Welch)."

A lady asked, "What should we do about Castro and the tractors?"

Meriam called it political blackmail, said that most of those on the committee (headed by Eleanor Roosevelt to bring about the exchange) "have a long record of contributing to the downfall of America."

His advice on Cuba was "to put a stop to the whole fantastic affair." We should send the Marines there "and settle this once and for all." This statement won the most enthusiastic applause of the evening.

From the opposition it inspired: "That's not the American way of doing things."

Meriam is about 33 years old. He was discharged from the Air Force four years ago and almost immediately decided that his calling was the fight against communism. Since then he has read about 100 books on the subject.

He has a wife and two small children.

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